



MEDICAL BOARD OF CALIFORNIA
BOARD OF PODIATRIC MEDICINE
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INFORMATION FOR CONSUMERS

Doctors of Podiatric Medicine (DPMs), often referred to as podiatrists or podiatric physicians, are highly trained specialists in foot and ankle medicine, rehabilitation, and surgery. The Board of Podiatric Medicine (BPM) is the unit of the Medical Board that administers their licensing.

The State Medical Practice Act requires that DPMs:

- Graduate from one of seven accredited and approved podiatric medical schools. The curriculum of these four-year schools is similar to that of medical schools for MDs but provides an added emphasis on the lower extremity.
- Pass Parts I, II and III of the exams administered by the Educational Testing Service for the National Board of Podiatric Medical Examiners.
- Complete at least one-year of graduate medical education (residency training).
- Meet at least one of several “continuing competence” indicators at every two-year renewal in addition to 50 hours of continuing medical education (CME).

Medical doctors (MDs) receive general training in medical school and specialty training in postgraduate residencies. Their licenses do not restrict them to their specialty area, but it is a violation of law for any doctor to practice outside his or her area of competence.

To further protect consumers, the DPM scope of practice is limited by the license itself to the area of specialization. Many individuals provide foot care, but only licensed doctors (MDs, DPMs, or DOs) may diagnose, treat, and prescribe for medical conditions.

Consumer Checklist

Check the Doctor's Qualifications:

- Check with Medical Board Verifications through our website [<http://bpm.ca.gov/>] or directly at:
[www2.dca.ca.gov/pls/wllpub/wllquery\\$.startup](http://www2.dca.ca.gov/pls/wllpub/wllquery$.startup)
or call: 916/263-2382
to make sure your doctor is licensed and to check on any malpractice or discipline history.
- Ask doctors about their foot and ankle training and if they are certified by an approved medical specialty board that is relevant. For DPMs, California has approved only three podiatric specialty boards: the American Board of Podiatric Surgery, the American Board of Podiatric Orthopedics & Primary Podiatric Medicine, and the American Board of Multiple Specialties in Podiatry. If you are seeing a non-podiatric doctor for podiatric care, ask about their training specific to foot & ankle. In 1995, the ACGME approved a 12-month Residency Education in Foot & Ankle Orthopedics program.

- Call 1-800-FOOT-CARE, the Foot Care Information Center sponsored by the American Podiatric Medical Association. It has free brochures answering many questions. Its state affiliate, the California Podiatric Medical Association, can be reached at 1-800-794-8988. CPMA, 2430 K Street, Suite 200, Sacramento, CA 95816. Or visit its website: <http://www.podiatrists.org/related.htm>
- Call the American College of Foot & Ankle Surgeons toll-free at 1-888-THE FEET (1-888-843-3338) for information about surgery. <http://www.acfas.org/>
- Ask your family physician to recommend a DPM.
- Obtain second opinions before surgery. Ask the surgeon to explain the risks, possible complications, and alternative methods of treatment. Ask how often they perform any recommended surgical procedure, and what the results have been. Costs should be fully disclosed before treatment.
- Except in emergencies, beware of rushed surgeries without attempts at conservative care. Be wary of multiple surgeries, claims about laser surgery (lasers do not cut bone), and promises of "painless surgery," "miracle cures," "discount coupons," and the like.
- Don't choose doctors by the size of their advertisements.

Patient Rights - Hospitals must post a policy on patient rights. If you don't see it, ask for a copy.

Fraud Hotlines - Call the Federal Inspector General (1-800-447-8477, that is HHS-TIPS) if you suspect your doctor, hospital, nursing home, or other provider is ripping off our tax-supported Medi-Cal or Medicare programs. The State Attorney General's Medi-Cal Fraud unit can be reached through 1-800-722-0432.

HMO Problems – Call 1-888-HMO-2219 or 1-800-400-0815 (State Department of Managed Health Care) to file a complaint about a health maintenance organization. Seniors in Medicare can call 1-800-638-6833.

FILING COMPLAINTS ABOUT DOCTORS--Call 1-800-MED-BDCA (1-800-633-2322) for information or to file a complaint. Written complaints should be addressed to: Central Complaints, Medical Board of California, 1426 Howe Avenue, Sacramento, CA 95825. Central Complaints can also advise about Better Business Bureau arbitration, Small Claims Court, filing with the profession's peer review program, or other agencies that might be able to help you.

How to file a complaint: http://www.medbd.ca.gov/complaint_info.htm

Consumer Complaint Form: <http://bpm.ca.gov/consgde/compform.pdf>

Consumer information from BPM: <http://bpm.ca.gov/consgde/index.htm>

Links to consumer, government and professional organizations: <http://bpm.ca.gov/links/index.htm>